

Exeter Fire District

(March 24, 2005)

Chairman Peter Lacouture called the March meeting of the Exeter Fire District to order at 7:02PM. Present were Commissioners Vergano, Lacouture, Nievera, Swanson, Wilbur and Reed. Commissioner Walker was absent. Also present were Mr. Brad Preston from VFIS, Mr. Michael Cerullo, the candidate for moderator and two members of the public.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Vergano moved (Mr. Wilbur second) acceptance of the minutes of the March 3 regular meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Vergano stated there was no recent activity on the account. All balances carried over from last month are accurate. Mr. Nievera stated he had reviewed the account and is satisfied with its accuracy.

Communications

Mr. Nievera reported he had received a letter of interest from Mike Cerullo for the position of moderator at our annual meeting. Also received was the Certificate of Exemption from the Division of Taxation as well as the completed “facilities use request form” authorizing the use of the high school auditorium for our annual meeting on April 13.

Old Business

A discussion concerning a tax collector will be continued until the next meeting.

Mr. Cerullo was interviewed for the position of moderator. He stated he looked forward to serving the town in this capacity if it was the desire of the board. Mr. Reed moved (Mr. Wilbur second) the appointment of Mr. Cerullo as moderator for the Exeter Fire District. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Vergano further explained the district budget including the percent increases and on what figures caps are typically calculated. The municipal tax budget cap is based on property tax rate increases and not budget amounts. She also explained that the certified values used by the tax district for the calculation of the tax rate would not include motor vehicles. There was a short discussion on the origin of

the \$1.20/\$1,000 rate used during the campaign for the creation of the fire district. Ms. Vergano said she feels the numbers used last year will not be reflective of the values this year. Based on 2003 certified assessment values and a tax base which does not include motor vehicles, last year's public safety tax rate was \$1.32. Assuming a 1.3% increase in assessed values for 2004 (estimated by the tax assessor) and the current proposed fire district budget, the new tax rate will be approximately \$1.41. This represents a tax rate increase of 6.6%.

Mr. Swanson wants FEMA funds to be applied towards general budgetary requirements of the organizations. Mr. Wilbur explained that because the town had established a hazard mitigation committee, they were eligible to apply for funds under a FEMA grant. These funds however, could not be used for operational reasons. The funds to which Mr. Swanson refers will be used to augment a communications system for the town.

Mr. Lacouture noted the posting date on tonight's agenda was in error. It was listed as 03/24, rather than 03/21. Mr. Nievera confirmed that the posting, as evidenced by the Secretary of State confirmation, was submitted on Monday (03/21) at 4:56pm. Copies posted at the U. S. Post Office (by Ms. Vergano) and the Exeter Package Store (by Mr. Nievera) were in fact corrected.

Mr. Preston from VFIS reported that our insurance program, including

bonding, is in place. The Chair, Treasurer and Tax Collector are covered under the terms of the bond. Our annual premium will be \$1801 for insurance and bond. The effective date for our insurance was 02/17/05 and bonding 03/16/05. Mr. Reed inquired as to the coverage for district office equipment (fax, computer, phones etc.). Mr. Preston will rate these items in June or July of this year, noting that we will most likely have one policy to cover all of public safety then. When asked, Mr. Preston responded he would meet with the board as any program for insurance consolidation nears.

Ms. Vergano asked of the letter of intent to use the office space located in station #1 for a tax collectors office. Mr. Lacouture will send this letter to Chief Kettelle.

Ms. Vergano and Mr. Lacouture will have a PowerPoint demonstration ready for the annual meeting explaining the district organization, make up of the board and budget.

Mr. Lacouture suggested attaching a copy of the by-laws to the posted warrants in addition to stating the by-laws could be viewed at the dispatch office. It was generally agreed to do so.

Mr. Lacouture explained the five resolutions that will be considered at the Annual Meeting. The majority of the discussion centered around a tax rate not falling on an even penny amount. Mr. Lacouture suggested placing a range in the resolution where the even penny

could be located, others suggested simply arriving at the tax rate and increasing it to the nearest penny. When the discussion had ended, Mr. Reed moved (Mr. Nievera second) to drop the idea of a range and adopt the verbiage to raise the rate to the nearest penny. Mr. Lacouture will re-word the necessary resolution.

The election for Ms. Vergano's position was discussed. Mr. Reed moved (Mr. Nievera second) the incumbent be placed first on the ballot followed by challengers, in alphabetical order. The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Swanson wanted to ensure space on the ballot be provided for write-ins. The general sense was that write-ins were not allowed because of the requirement for nomination papers.

Mr. Nievera requested one member from each department be nominated for inclusion to the grant committee. Ms. Vergano made the same request for her cost reduction/consolidation committee. Mr. Nievera will notify each organization of this request.

Chief Caito (Rescue) started a short discussion on the merits of altering the date for the annual meeting. At the end of the discussion Ms. Vergano moved to amend the by-laws to allow flexibility in the scheduling of the annual meeting. There was no second, the motion failed.

Mr. Swanson expressed his desire to have the make-up of each committee consist of all board members. Mr. Nievera and Mr. Reed

stated they had no interest in attending meetings every week, when a committee could be much more effective. Mr. Nievera informed the board that he had written three letters requesting legislative grants over the past week.

New Business

There was no new business discussed.

Adjournment

Mr. Nievera moved (Mr. Wilbur second) adjournment at 9:17PM. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Nievera, Clerk

The Exeter Fire District